

Tallgrass Sierran

March/April 2003 Volume 31 No. 2

THE HEART OF ILLINOIS GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB ♦ P.O. Box 3593, Peoria, IL 61614 ☎ (309) 637-1393

HOI Group Meetings

**WED
MAR 19** **The Urban Forest**
Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

From the 20th floor of a downtown building, all you can see in the central city are treetops. As the urban area sprawls onto surrounding farmland, all you see are rooftops. Elroy Limmer, arborist for the Peoria Park District, will discuss what trees to plant in this area, how to plant them and how to keep your existing trees healthy. *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*

**WED
APR 16** **The Prairie Monk**
Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

The Prairie Monk? That's David Monk, host of environmental programs on WEST 90.1 FM community radio in Champaign-Urbana. For many years he has promoted rail to trails and restoration and preservation projects in East Central Illinois. At present, he is aiding a 1,000 acre prairie restoration. *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*

Tongass National Rain Forest Disaster

Backdoor Anti-Environmental Riders
Added to 2003 Federal Budget Bill
In Last Minute Sneak Attack

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

In a backdoor, over-the-weekend maneuver, Senator Ted Stevens, Republican, Alaska, who is Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, launched a massive attack on public lands nationwide, but with particular focus on Alaskan public lands. Dire consequences for the Tongass National Rain Forest are among the environmentally disastrous results. Senator Stevens inserted wording to require the Forest Service to increase Tongass logging fivefold regardless of the effects on habitat and other forest resources. Timber industries will be able to clear cut in the most pristine sections of the Tongass, including the largest most ancient trees and critical wildlife habitat areas. Your tax dollars

will help subsidize this horrific cutting, as tax dollars are used to build logging roads for the timber industry. Stevens also added wording in the Appropriation Bill that prevents any challenging or judicial review of the soon-to-be-released Tongass Land Management Act. Other provisions negatively affect the Chugach National Forest, and there are other damaging provisions. For more information, check the Alaska Wilderness League website at <http://www.alaskawild.org/>.

At 17 million acres, the Tongass is the nation's largest national forest and the biggest intact coastal temperate rainforest in the world. Its streams contain rich salmon spawning grounds, the world's densest population of bald eagles, and hosts of other wildlife. Remember this outrage at the next election and donate often and early to politicians and parties who oppose the underhanded tactics of anti-environmental riders.

Senator Peter Fitzgerald Earns Our Great Thanks

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Senator Peter Fitzgerald took another great step on behalf of the environment when he signed a letter with five other moderate Republicans, asking the Senate Republican leadership to abandon a backdoor effort to reverse the current ban on drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Please thank Senator Fitzgerald for his help in protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, at his Chicago office 312-886-3506 or in Washington, D.C. 202-224-2854, or

send him a thank you card at the U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510. Currently the Republicans have inserted wording in the 2004 Federal Budget Bill that assumes revenues from drilling in the refuge, and this is a very backdoor and underhanded effort by the Bush Administration to open the Refuge to drilling.



GET MAD AND GET ACTIVE!
**Make an EARTH DAY '03
Resolution**

- Attend a Sierra Club Program at Forest Park Nature Center.
- Write letters on issues that you care about.
- Phone your Representatives and Senators about an environmental issue in this newsletter.
- Make a special financial donation to an environmental group, such as Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (phone 801-486-3161) or the Alaska Wilderness League (phone 202-544-5205).
- Reduce, reuse, recycle.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Prescription Drug Disposal

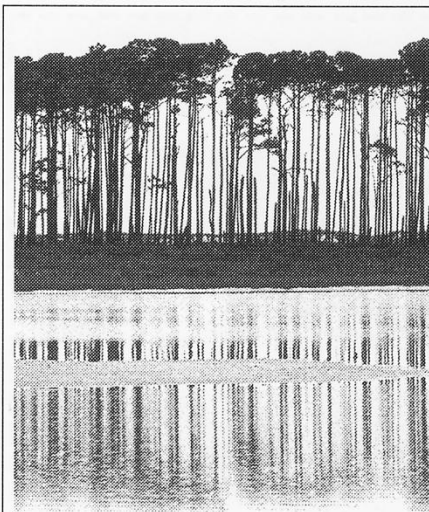
BY NORMAN AND CINDY EWING

How do you dispose of expired or unused prescription drugs? Many people flush their unwanted drugs down the toilet. Recently, however, concerns have been raised about the safety of dumping drugs and other chemical substances into our waste water systems where they may either be released into our waterways or recycled into drinking water.

Are drugs in the drinking water affecting humans? There's no definitive answer to that question, yet. Studies are underway but have not yet determined what, if any, effect the presence of prescription medication in drinking water may be. However, several environmental watch groups have recently sounded alarms about a marked decrease in the numbers and viability of aquatic wildlife. There has been a flurry of articles published in the last few years suggesting that chemicals in the water systems are having a detrimental effect on aquatic reproduction and there seems to be a significant increase in mutations and malformations. While there are likely multiple

causes to this problem such as industrial chemicals, rising water temperatures and agricultural chemical runoff, it is easy to see how drugs such as anti-coagulants, and reproductive hormones could be contributing to the decline of animals exposed to them. When aquatic wildlife such as fishes and frogs decreases, the aquatic birds that feed on them suffer and there can be a resulting ripple effect through the whole food chain.

How should you dispose of unused or expired prescription drugs? In some parts of the world, the consumer can return unused drugs to pharmacies to have them incinerated. Locally, however, pharmacists are legally prohibited from accepting the return of unused or expired medications. This leaves disposal up to the consumer. For want of a better solution, local pharmacists suggest that we should place unused or expired medications in double plastic bags and place them in the trash for disposal. This is not the perfect solution but it is better than flushing the medications down the toilet.



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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Go to Springfield on March 19th!



BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Join in a great day in Springfield to lobby your state Representatives and Senator on Wednesday, March 19th. Illinois Sierra Club, Chapter Office, is organizing an environmental issues lobby day. Issue briefings and information will be supplied to all participants. Lunch and transportation can be provided. The theme for the day is "Moving Passion into Action to Protect Our Environment." Contact Jen Hensley at the Illinois Sierra office in Chicago, phone 312-251-1680 or email her at jennifer.hensley@sierraclub.org by March 14th.



The Accidental Environmentalist



BY RALPH GINN

The polls have, for decades, shown 65% of Americans are concerned about the environment and consider themselves conservation advocates. Election results and buying trends say otherwise. In the 2002 election, Colorado voted to send Wayne Allard back to the U.S. Senate for another six years. Allard's League of Conservation Voters (LCV) scorecard was 0 and 8 (out of 100) for the 106th and 107th Congresses. And, this is a state with a huge tourism and recreation industry, and a population skewed toward youth and outdoor activity. Allard tried to paint himself as an environmentalist in the final weeks before the election in response to his opponent's endorsement by LCV. Carl Pope, executive director, of Sierra Club, summed up the Wayne Allards of the election with this remark, "The good news is that never before have so many people been elected to Congress claiming to care about the air, the water, and the land. The bad news is that so many of them didn't mean it."

Americans bought a record number of SUV's last year, ignoring the twin warnings of terrorism and global warming (see inserts). That SUV's high fuel consumption contributes disproportionately to greenhouse gases responsible for global warming is no longer a question. The warming timetable may be in

dispute, but the world scientific community is in near unanimous agreement that the trend is man-caused and carbon dioxide emissions are the culprit. The link between terrorism and SUV's is not as transparent. But, TV commercials targeting several large American cities ask, "What's your SUV doing to our national security?" Last fall an evangelical group's ads asked, "What would Jesus drive?" Activists are slapping guilt-trip bumper stickers on SUVs, and lists of oil companies that import Persian Gulf oil popcorn over the internet.

Is the public paying attention? Eron Shosteck of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers notes that carmakers already offer 34 models that get 30mpg. Hybrid cars are on the road now, and hydrogen-powered fuel cell cars will appear in showrooms within the next two years. But, in the final analysis, it may not be activists' efforts, but rising gasoline and SUV prices, in a slumping economy, that turns middle-class Americans into accidental environmentalists. If there was ever a catch-22 for the dedicated, this be it. We feel compelled to welcome the prodigals, and accept high gas prices and a skinny wallet as part of the contract. Add the sour memory of the 70's gas shortages and subsequent conservation efforts that were negated by an

The 10 hottest years worldwide:

1. 1998 (hottest)
2. 2002
3. 2001
4. 1997
5. 1990 and 1995 (tie)
7. 1999
8. 2000
9. 1991
10. 1987 (10th hottest)

Major companies that import Persian Gulf oil (9/1/00 - 8/31/01):

Shell	206 million barrels
Chevron/Texaco...	144 million barrels
Exxon/Mobil.....	130 million barrels
Marathon.....	118 million barrels
Amoco.....	62 million barrels

Major companies that do not import Persian Gulf oil:

Citgo
Sunoco
Conoco
Sinclair
BP/Phillips
Hess

American psyche reversal when Ronald Reagan led the country back to its over-consumptive ways.

Take Action

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Utah Wilderness Needs Your Help

Please write Representative Ray LaHood, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515, and ask that he cosponsor America's Redrock Wilderness Act. This bill will designate wilderness areas on Utah BLM lands which were identified by the Utah Wilderness Coalition inventory as having wilderness qualities. These scenic and fragile lands are threatened by mining, drilling, and extensive ATV use which will ruin their beauty and wilderness quality for future generations. Currently these lands are owned by we, the U.S. citizens, and we should demand that they be given full protection and not be squandered for short-term industry use and damaging motor powered vehicle entertainment recreation.

Join Illinois I-ACT:

A Free and Great Way to Help the Environment

The Illinois Action Project (I-ACT) works to protect and enhance the Illinois environment. It is a free, two-year-old statewide legislative action alert system maintained jointly by leading environmental, public health, and planning groups in the state. Sierra Club, Openlands Project, the Illinois Environmental Council, the Environmental Law and Policy Center, and other groups fund the project. It's sole purpose to is raise awareness of legislative matters affecting our environment, our public health, and our public planning processes. I-ACT serves as a means of connecting concerned Illinois citizens with their elected officials. For more information email info@illinoisactionproject.org.

